



March 9, 2023

Dear Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

My name is Patrick Romano, and I am a resident of Guilford, Connecticut. I am a partner and the managing owner of the Marketplace at the Guilford Food Center, a restaurant that includes a deli, cafe, bakery and catering service which employs 30 full-time staff and 20 part-time summer staff. I am writing in support of HB 6859: An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling.

Our business is a service industry, and we experience many of the same challenges as are faced by other similar businesses. Yet we have learned that running a values-based company that treats our employees with dignity and respect has allowed us to avoid the problems many similar businesses encounter.

To begin with, all staff, including students, immediately start receiving paid time off (PTO) to use at their discretion and for whatever reason they choose. We also start our base pay at \$15 an hour and pay as high as \$35 for our management team. In fact, the average hourly wage is over \$19 an hour excluding tips and gratuities. We also currently cover 50% of healthcare costs as we move toward providing 100% coverage, hopefully soon.

I state all this to point out that these are traditionally unheard-of benefits in the restaurant business but that are indeed, and in-fact, possible.

As for our policy on scheduling, we currently provide staff with a 10-day window for their schedule and use an app that allows them to request days off (it should be noted that no request for time off has been denied in our three years in business), switch shifts with each other without having to ask management, and track their accrued benefits for easy access on their mobile devices.

Although, like any restaurant, we've had our share of last-minute call outs and a few no shows, we have found that providing a predictable work schedule benefits our employees tremendously, especially those with childcare concerns and health issues, and allows them to plan for their time away from work. We also have a much higher retention level than most businesses in this industry.

We are proud of our record in support of our staff and have seen the benefits firsthand of providing the benefits too often denied to them in this industry. Our average team member has



been with us for 2.5 years and most new hires are referrals from our current staff, who encourage friends and acquaintances to apply to our business.

Despite the apparent “costs” associated with our model, the long-term benefits far outweigh any short-term investments and ultimately pay for themselves over time. I firmly believe that all workers in any industry deserve a predictable schedule and should be treated with fairness. To my fellow business owners, I can only say do not believe those who tell you it cannot work, as indeed it already has.

I strongly support HB 6859 and ask the committee to support it as well and pass this legislation! Thank you for allowing me your time.

Sincerely,

Patrick Romano
Partner/ General Manager
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